

The Basics of Hand Tool Safety

To most workers, a simple hand tool wouldn't be considered a huge safety risk. However, hand tools that are used, transported, or kept in poor working order can be a danger to workers and bystanders.

One of the most often seen dangers is when a tool is being used at an overhead level and becomes a falling object. In fact, on construction sites, the third most common cause of injury is falling objects. Furthermore, 10% of all disabling work-related injuries are the result of falling objects.

When working from ladders, balconies, platforms, tanks, roofs, equipment, or other area above a normal working level, workers should ensure that all tools, materials, and equipment are positioned in a manner that will prevent them from rolling, slipping, or dropping to the ground. This is especially true when the tools must be placed on a surface that's curved or sloping. Do keep in mind that tools can vibrate during certain working conditions and shift from their position. Workers carrying tools to overhead work levels should use a bucket or other sturdy container for transport. A hand line may be used to hoist the bucket or tool up. Remember to ensure that no one is standing underneath the tools as they are being hoisted up.

Here are a few additional safety guidelines that workers should adhere to when using hand tools:

- Keep all tools in good working order—clean, functional, oiled, and sharpened.
- Never use any tool for anything other than what the tool was intended.
- Capacity means capacity; never use cheaters or otherwise force a tool to function beyond its specified capacity.
- Keep chisels, punches, star drills, and any other tools subject to impact properly sharpened to prevent a fragment breaking off and becoming a dangerous flying object.
- Keep cutting tools sharpened and use proper handles.
- Avoid using dull, rounded, chipped, or tapered drill bits.
- When using a screwdriver, don't use your hand to hold undersized work. Use a vise for security whenever it's possible.
- Never transport any pointed tool, such as a screw driver, chisel, or drill bit, in clothing pockets. A tool belt should be used to carry such tools.
- Only use the size and weight hammer required for the job. Always ensure that the hammer's head is ground, handle isn't loose, and claws aren't broken before it's used.
- Only use the size and type of screwdriver the job requires. Never use a screwdriver with a badly worn head or damaged handle.
- Only use the size wrench that the job requires. Wrenches with worn jaws or teeth shouldn't be used. Adjustable wrenches should be tested to ensure they adjust and work freely.



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